



The Azalean

The Newsletter of the Azalea Society of America

Volume I, No. 2

May 1979

THE AZALEA MART IS COMING SOON

Activities Underway for

May 12th Event

The ASA Azalea Mart will be held on Saturday, May 12, 1979, adjacent to the Suburban Trust Building, University Boulevard (one block west of Georgia Avenue), Wheaton, Maryland. The event begins at 9:30 a.m. and continues until 4:00 p.m.

There will be on sale at the Mart a considerable number and variety of azaleas, companion plants, and ground cover, including some azaleas that are not easily available from commercial sources.

A committee under the coordination of Ryon Page has been working actively to plan the numerous facets of this activity. An undertaking of this size requires extensive preparations, and accordingly Ryon Page has asked The Azalean to make it known that additional volunteers will be welcome, to assist at the Mart on May 12th. Contact him by phone at (301) 593-2415.

Members who desire to sell azaleas and companion plants (30% commission to ASA) may arrange to do so. Contact Claudia Seipp, telephone (301) 681-7157.

There will also be an ASA "club table" for the sale of plants, large or small, that may be donated for this purpose. The proceeds will further the work of ASA. Contact Warren Groomes, telephone (301) 622-0459, or Mary Rutley, telephone (301) 933-2339.

Since the ASA desires that the Mart offer only high quality plants for sale whether it be by members or on behalf of the Society, one basic rule must be observed. That is, all plants must be

REPORT ON ASA ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's first annual meeting was held March 25, 1979 in the main auditorium of the National Arboretum, Washington, D.C.

At the business session, the members elected the slate of governors presented by the Nominating Committee. Five of these ten individuals will serve for one year, and five for two years. The newly named governors are listed on the masthead of The Azalean, page 2 herein.

The members also voted to adopt the by-laws of the Society as presented at the October 28, 1978 meeting, with minor changes relating to the timing of events in the Society's year. These changes became desirable because of the scheduling of the annual meeting for spring rather than winter.

Following the business meeting, Frank White presented a talk and conducted a discussion with the audience on practical aspects of successful azalea gardening. A synopsis of his presentation appears as a separate article in this issue of The Azalean.

AZALEA MART (continued)

clearly and accurately tagged. Unnamed plants may be sold if they are clearly tagged as unnamed.

The ASA Azalea Mart is both a fund raising project and an opportunity to promote in homeowners and gardeners an added appreciation of azaleas. It provides a means to share information with members and the general public about the care and culture of azaleas during the spring flowering season.

Azalea Society of AmericaBoard of Governors

Frank B. White, Jr., Chairman (1980)	George W. Harding, Member (1980)
Dr. Neil P. Campbell, Member (1981)	Alice J. Holland, Member (1980)
Emile A. Deckert, Member (1981)	William H. Parsons, Member (1981)
Nathan C. Fitts, Member (1981)	Marie Thais Spencer, Member (1980)
Judith Groomes, Member (1980)	Mrs. Leon Swell, Member (1981)

Officers

President: Dr. Neil P. Campbell	Recording Secretary: Alice J. Holland
Vice President: (vacant)	Corresponding Secty: Anna Jane Martin
Treasurer: William H. Parsons	

ORGANIZATIONAL DOINGS

Governors Elected. The list of names on the masthead (above) is the result of the election of members of the Board of Governors as voted at the annual meeting of the Society. The date following each name indicates the tenure of that member (either a one- or a two-year term) as determined by lot in a blind drawing held during the Board's initial meeting on April 4, 1979. In succeeding years, the by-laws call for the election of five governors for two-year terms, but in this initial year, in order to start the process, it was necessary to elect ten, and then by lot choose five to serve for one year and five for two years.

Appreciation to Retiring President, Emile Deckert. Emile requested that he not be considered for a second term as a national officer. While continuing as a member of the Board, he has agreed to serve as the focal point for the organization of the Brookside Gardens chapter of the Society, serving the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. During the past year, as President of ASA, Emile Deckert has devoted countless hours, great energy, and unmatched technical expertise to the formative aspects of the Society.

Governors Establish Dues. The Board voted at its April 4, 1979 meeting to set the annual dues at \$10.00. The Board also voted that dues for lifetime membership should be set at a lump sum payment of \$150.00. Since a husband and wife may share a single annual membership (with one vote), the Board determined that a husband and wife might likewise share the lifetime membership.

Governors Recommend Dues-Sharing Formula with Chapters. The Board voted at its April 4, 1979 meeting to recommend to the members of the Society that dues should be divided 50-50 between the national society and any chapter with which an individual is affiliated (except that if a life member changes chapter affiliation, the receiving chapter should not become entitled to share in the previously-paid lifetime dues).

Secretary and Treasurer. The duties of these two offices are expanding as the Society grows. In order to meet the requirements for carrying out these functions, the Chairman of the Board of Governors has appointed a committee to identify members willing to take responsibilities in these two areas. The committee members are Emile Deckert, Judith Groomes and Alice Holland.

Chapter Organization. The members voted at the annual meeting to approve a revision of the ASA by-laws so as to permit chapters to be organized as incorporated or unincorporated entities in accordance with local law.

SOME PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL AZALEA GARDENING

Frank White Leads Discussion at ASA Annual Meeting

In abbreviated form, below, are practical guidelines for the selection and care of azaleas. Frank White, ASA Vice President, led the presentation and discussion of this topic at the ASA annual meeting, March 25, 1979, at the National Arboretum. The discussion included comments from experienced growers in the audience, including George Harding, Thais Spencer, and Bill Parsons.

Plant Health. Beware of pot-bound plants. Their roots are reluctant to spread beyond the boundaries of their original ball of earth. When this condition is encountered, carefully remove the plant from its pot, turn it over, and cut an X on the bottom. This will loosen the clump which can then be washed with a hose to shake the roots free. To evaluate the condition of a container plant, by mid-May there should be pink or white fibrous roots at the perimeter of the root ball. Red or black roots, or a hard root ball, are signs of a plant in poor condition.

Evaluating Azaleas Offered for Sale. The greater Washington area is in a zone that may be too cold for some southern plants. Many southern plants have spectacular blooms, which makes them attractive both to sellers and buyers. You will have a better chance of buying wisely if you know your seller, and particularly if you make sure that you purchase plants that are grown locally or grown in an equivalent or more northerly latitude than that of Washington.

Choosing Azaleas. For the beginning azalea gardener, it may be prudent to start out with a few plants that have proven successful in the greater Washington area. For example, Hino (red), Delaware Valley (white), and Coral Bells (pink) are so popular locally because they are reliably hardy and are good bloomers year after year. Beyond this point of departure, there are literally dozens of plant varieties that can be explored--with the advice of an informed friend or nurseryman. Because of the tremendous varieties in color, size of blooms, character of foliage, and growth pattern (habit) of azaleas, what is best for your own garden is a matter of personal choice. There is no sacred list of the "Best Ten" or "Best Fifty", etc. As Ben Morrison said, best is a matter of relativity.

Planting Sites; Light and Shade. A mature azalea will grow in either sun or shade. In a sunny spot, more buds can be expected, but the sun tends to make some colors (e.g., red) look bleached out. A young plant needs protection from full sun. In a shady area, a plant is inclined to grow taller and with fewer blooms. Plants need protection from dehydration due to winter winds and unseasonable warming due to winter sun. On balance, high shade in the azalea garden offers sun and wind protection, both winter and summer.

Soil and Fertilization. Although the Washington, D.C. area generally has poor soil, the soil's acidity provides very favorable local conditions for azaleas. "Hollytone" is a good fertilizer--safe and not too strong. For cuttings and transplants, "Osmocote" is good and now for the first time it is becoming available in a small size. This preparation should not be used until the temperature is over 75° (F.), and it works slowly, with no effect for some 25 days but with a residual effect lasting throughout the year. Cottonseed meal and soybean meal

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SOME PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL AZALEA GARDENING (continued)

are good but work slowly and require moisture (i.e., rain) for the plant to absorb them. Beware of fertilizing too late in the year; avoid stimulating late growth that may cause bark split or winter kill. Water plants well in June and July (and in dry spells) in order to get fertilizer in solution to the roots before the danger of cold weather. Do not over fertilize; use half of what the fertilizer container advises. It is not necessary to fertilize old plants; young plants like fertilizer, but apply it lightly. Well-rotted cow manure is like cottonseed meal--good but slow working. Horse manure is not a good fertilizer.

Preparing the Hole. Even an old azalea will not have roots that go down more than about 18 inches. Walk and dig carefully around azalea roots. If you are planting in a hole, dig it shallow and considerably wider all around than the root ball. Azaleas like well-drained spots; if you are in doubt about your drainage, dig a hole and fill it with water; let it stand for 12 hours and check to see whether the water has gone into the ground; if so, there is no problem. In planting, you may mix the soil with sawdust, shredded hardwood (also called tanbark), or sphagnum peat moss. Mix the fertilizer and soil together thoroughly. If your conditions are such that digging a hole is undesirable, you can plant the azaleas in a mounded bed on top of the ground; this type of planting can be observed at the Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, Maryland.

Mulches. There are pros and cons to mulches. They can help keep the soil aerated; they can preserve moisture; they can keep the soil cool; and they make weeds easier to pull. But mulches may contribute to winter damage, as in the case where a too heavy mulch keeps the plant from going into dormancy. This, in turn, can lead to bark split. Mulches can harbor rodents and squirrels. Ants, and the like, may find mulch a good place to take up residence.

Injuries. The past three winters have been particularly hard on plants. Bark split, which appears at the base of a plant, is apt to occur as a result of a heavy rain followed by a sharp drop in nighttime temperature, usually in late fall. The sap is still up in the plant, and the rapid freeze causes the sap to expand and split the bark. If you can get at the wound quickly, paraffin and tape may provide first aid, but in other cases you may have to cut the plant back. Rabbit damage has been noticeable due to the recent hard winters. Rabbits particularly like Satsukis, Macranthas, and some Gables. Repellants are available from garden and farm supply stores, and they are fairly helpful.

Diseases. Lace Bugs hatch in the spring when the temperature has climbed above 75° (F.). Malathion spraying is effective. The indications of the presence of lace bugs are the plant has a speckled appearance and black spots on the bottom of new leaves. Spray initially around May 30th after the bugs have hatched. One month later, look at new leaves for any new damage, and if found, spray again. Lace bugs are more troublesome in full sun, and are not a major problem in shade. Stem Borers are a problem for which there is no ready cure. Chlordane may be of some benefit (but it is going off the market for homeowners).

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION? Write to the Azalea Society of America, P.O. Box 6244, Silver Spring, Md. 20906. Whether it is a gardening question, or an inquiry about membership, simply use the foregoing address. New members are welcome! Ask about it.

ASA FEBRUARY MEETING DISCUSSES NEWER VARIETIESGeorge Harding Presentation

George W. Harding presented an illustrated talk on the newer varieties of azaleas at the ASA meeting on February 1, 1979. The event was held at the Good Luck Recreation Center of the Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission, Lanham, Maryland.

The some 40 members in attendance experienced a rare opportunity to obtain hard-to-come-by, first-hand information about varieties of azaleas that are of increasing interest among sophisticated gardeners.

The presentation included slides and commentary on Mary Louisa B. (Polly) Hill, who is giving special attention to hardy (Zone 6), low-growing, evergreen azaleas with clear colors.

The speaker also described the cultivars of Ralph W. Pennington, whose work (after his death in 1976) has been carried on in Georgia by Bruce Hancock; these activities have involved Glenn Dales and Satsukis.

Anthony M. Shammarello is another hybridizer, working in Ohio with both rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas. The latter are characterized by their hardiness; they are low, compact and spreading, and are well-suited for urban landscaping.

The speaker also presented slides and commentary on the Benjamin Y. Morrison Back Acre azaleas, and the G. Albert Reid Linwood Hardy azaleas. The former, which are becoming well known and increasingly available from nurserymen, are characterized by large flowers and contrasting-colored centers, and they are late bloomers. The Linwood Hardys are available from the Reid Nursery in Linwood, New Jersey, and some 20 of them are in the current catalog of the Marshy Point Nursery, Chase, Maryland (on Chesapeake Bay, outside Baltimore).

The speaker also described the Robin Hill azaleas, hardy evergreens with large textured flowers, developed by Robert D. Gartrell at Wyckoff, New Jersey. Both the Linwood Hardys and the Robin Hills are scheduled to be covered in greater detail in technical reports that will appear in The Azalean.

CULTURAL NOTES

Plastic Puts Down Plant Problems. The Southern Nurserymen's Association's "Keeping Posted" column is the source of this note, which reports that a University of California-Davis research project has demonstrated that a thin sheet of clear plastic spread over the ground can produce a breakthrough in the control of plant diseases. The ingredients: clear polyethylene plastic sheets spread over the ground, along with a thorough soaking with water of the soil under the plastic, plus the sun's heat for three or four weeks during hot weather months. The results: "solarized" soil to a depth of 12-18 inches, nearly 100% free of fungi and other harmful organisms. James E. DeVay, professor of plant pathology at UCD, calls the work, by George S. Pullman, a doctoral candidate in plant pathology, a significant breakthrough for the non-chemical control of crop diseases.

CULTURAL NOTES

Caution on Oil Sprays. In a recent publication from the University of Maryland's Cooperative Extension Service, nurserymen are warned against improper use of oil sprays to control scale infestation. Fred Lee's book lists Azalea Bark Scale and Peony Scale as among the pests which can cause severe injury to azaleas, and for which oil sprays are effective treatment, but Lee makes no mention of when to apply them.

The Maryland publication says that oil sprays should be used only during dormancy. They are more effective then, and damage to plants can occur if used during warm weather. In addition, several kinds of insecticides and fungicides can damage plants if used within a week before or after use of the oil spray.

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Chemicals May Not Mix Well. Many veteran azaleans firmly believe that overuse of chemical fertilizers and insecticides kills more plants than any other cause. These materials should be used only when your own experience, an expert friend, or an authoritative horticultural book tells you what to use for a specific problem. Further, they should be used at about half the strength and frequency given on the label. Also, dire and unexpected results sometimes occur when one sort of treatment is given immediately after another. Chemical combinations with unforeseen bad results often occur when humans mix different medications internally. The same thing undoubtedly occurs in plants.

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Pine Bark as Fertilizer. Pine bark (fine grade) is widely known as a good substitute for the more expensive baled sphagnum peat moss that is much used by azalea growers. Now it is reported from the Virginia State Ornamentals Research Station that pine bark used as a planting mix provides its own fertilizer. The Research Station reports that Hershey Red azaleas potted in pure fine grade pine bark grew as well without fertilizer as similarly potted plants which were liberally fertilized.

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Tree Competition. A favorite setting for azaleas is near the edge of high deciduous shade cast by large old trees. But if those trees are silver maples, elms, or other shallow-rooted species, the azaleas may lose out in competition for food and moisture. You can help in this unequal battle by thrusting a spade vertically and deeply into the soil, down through the tree's roots, in a circle about a foot wider than the azalea's root spread. Do this when you first set out the plant, and repeat annually.

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Plants Need Sulfur; Humans Shouldn't Breathe It. Plants use sulfur to synthesize the high-quality proteins upon which depends both their and our own survival. Sulfur affects the chlorophyll content of green plants, and therefore affects their ability to carry on photosynthesis. Plants are compensating for losses of sulfur in soil, a TVA researcher has reported, by absorbing sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide gases directly from the atmosphere. Because of our national efforts to keep sulfur pollutants out of human lungs, we may soon have to start feeding sulfur to green plants.